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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) An online auction server system for enabling bidding over a computer network by remotely located bidders utilizing computing devices for receiving information to be provided to a bidder and transmitting bid information of the bidder, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide an auction service having 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for auction a plurality of items, each item being offered for a preestablished duration of time, and the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid, a final successful bid being at least equal to the final preliminary bid; and 2) a dynamic real-time auction component conducted over the computer network, beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the preestablished duration of time ~~expiration of the preestablished duration of time following the end of the preliminary bidding component~~ and continuing until a higher bid is no longer received, said dynamic auction component offering for auction each of the plurality of items from the preliminary auction component, whereby a successful dynamic bid on each item is greater than the final preliminary bid for the item received during the preliminary bidding component.

2. (cancelled)

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3. (original) The system of claim 1 wherein proxy bids are accepted during the preliminary auction component.

4. (previously presented) The system of claim 3 wherein a proxy bidder's current bid is automatically increased by a minimum increment in response to a higher bid, the minimum increment continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been reached.

5. (previously presented) The system of claim 1 further comprising a countdown timer displayed on a screen of each remotely located bidder during the dynamic auction component, the countdown timer used to inform each bidder of a running time remaining until the item can no longer be bid on.

6. (original) The system of claim 5 wherein the countdown timer resets in response to a bid being input.

7. (original) The system of claim 1 further comprising a means for alerting bidders during the dynamic auction component that a specific item of interest is nearly ready to be offered for auction.

8. (previously presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an audible alarm transmitted through the computer network.

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9. (previously presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is comprises a communication external to the computer network.

10. (previously presented) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an instant message.

11. (previously presented) The system of claim 9 wherein the communication is one of a telephone call and a pager alert.

12. (original) The system of claim 7 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an electronic mail message transmitted to bidders.

13. (original) The system of claim 1 wherein bids in excess of a preestablished bid increment are treated as proxy bids.

14. (original) The system of claim 3 wherein proxy bids by the high bidder during the preliminary bidding component are carried over to the dynamic auction component.

15. (currently amended) A method of conducting an auction over a computer network comprising:

offering over the network a preliminary bidding on items whereby a plurality of items is offered for auction, each item being offered for a preestablished time period;

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accepting preliminary bids resulting in a final preliminary bid, a final successful bid being at least equal to the final preliminary bid;

closing the preliminary bidding upon expiration of said preestablished time period;  
offering over the network dynamic real-time bidding for each of the items after said closing of the preliminary bidding; upon expiration of said preestablished time period;  
determining whether there is at least one dynamic bid during the dynamic real-time bidding greater than the final preliminary bid; and

identifying the final successful bid as one of the final preliminary bid and the at least one dynamic bid.

16. (cancelled)

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising accepting proxy bids during the preliminary bidding.

18. (original) The method of claim 17 further comprising automatically increasing a proxy bidder's current bid by a minimum amount in response to a higher bid, said automatic bid increasing continuing until no further higher bids are forthcoming or until a maximum proxy bid has been achieved.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising displaying a countdown timer on a screen of each remotely located bidder during the dynamic bidding, the countdown timer informing each bidder of a time remaining until the item can no longer be bid on.

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20. (currently amended) The method of claim 17-19 further comprising resetting the countdown timer in response to each dynamic bid.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 15 further comprising alerting bidders prior to the real-time bidding of each item.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders includes the step of generating an audible signal through the network.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders includes the step of generating a communication external to the network.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 21 wherein alerting bidders includes the step of generating an instant message through the network.

25. (previously presented) The system of claim 23 wherein the communication is one of a telephone call and a pager alert.

26. (original) The system of claim 21 wherein the means for alerting bidders is an electronic mail message transmitted to bidders.

27. (currently amended) The method of claim 15 further comprising treating the preliminary bids having values in excess of a preestablished bid increment as proxy bids.

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28. (currently amended) The system of claim 15-17 further comprising carrying over the proxy bids placed accepted during the preliminary bidding to the dynamic real-time bidding auction.

29. (currently amended) A method for conducting an auction over a computer network comprising:

conducting a first auction portion

offering a plurality of items, each item being offered for a preestablished duration,

a communication over the network causing the display of a first auction portion status, including a final first auction portion high bid that is at least equal to a final successful bid; and

closing the first auction portion upon expiration of the preestablished duration;

conducting a second real-time virtual auction portion after said closing of the first auction portion, the second real-time virtual auction portion

offering the plurality of items, whereby a successful second auction portion bid will be greater than the final first auction portion high bid,

the network causing the display of the second auction portion status, including a current high bid and a second auction portion countdown timer showing a running time until a current bid will be deemed a winning bid unless a more favorable bid is received; and

identifying a resulting in the final successful bid as being one of a-the final first auction portion high bid and a second auction portion bid.

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30. (previously presented) The method of claim 29 further comprising alerting interested users during the second auction portion that a specific item is close to being offered for bid.

31. (cancelled)

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 29 wherein the second auction portion countdown timer resets in response to an input bid.

33. (currently amended) An online auction server system for enabling bidding over a computer network by remotely located bidders utilizing computing devices for receiving information to be provided to a bidder and transmitting bid information of the bidder, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide an auction service having 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for auction at least one item, the item being offered for a preestablished duration of time, and the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid, a final successful bid being at least equal to the final preliminary bid; and 2) a dynamic real-time auction component conducted over the computer network, beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the preestablished duration of time expiration of the preestablished duration of time following the end of the preliminary bidding component and continuing until a higher bid is no longer received, said dynamic auction component offering for auction the at least one item from the preliminary auction component,

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whereby a successful dynamic bid on the item is greater than the final preliminary bid for the item received during the preliminary bidding component.

34. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is commenced in an operator-definable time after the closing of the preliminary bidding component.

35. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the closing of the preliminary bidding component prevents acceptance of additional bids until the dynamic real-time auction component is commenced, the dynamic real-time auction component being commenced in a predefined time after the closing of the preliminary bidding component.

36. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component is prevented from resulting in a sale.

37. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is required to be conducted to determine the final successful bid.

38. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time auction component is conducted regardless of an outcome of the preliminary bidding component.

39. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component provides a first bidding format, and the dynamic real-time auction component provides a different bidding format.

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40. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the preliminary bidding component offers the plurality of items for bid simultaneously, and the dynamic real-time auction component offers the plurality of items for bid individually and consecutively.

41. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time component is configured to decrease an amount of time allotted between dynamic bids as the total number of dynamic bids received increases.

42. (new) The system of claim 1 wherein the dynamic real-time component is configured to provide a matrix of selectable bid amounts for selection by a user.

43. (new) The system of claim 42 wherein the selectable bid amounts are based on the final preliminary bid.

44. (new) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding is commenced in an operator-definable time after said closing of the preliminary bidding.

45. (new) The method of claim 15 wherein said closing of the preliminary bidding prevents acceptance of additional bids until said offering of the dynamic real-time bidding, the dynamic real-time bidding being offered in a predefined time after said closing of the preliminary bidding.

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46. (new) The method of claim 15 further comprising preventing the preliminary bidding from resulting in a sale.

47. (new) The method of claim 15 further comprising requiring said offering of the dynamic real-time bidding to be performed to determine the final successful bid.

48. (new) The method of claim 15 further comprising performing said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding regardless of an outcome of the preliminary bidding.

49. (new) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the preliminary bidding includes providing a first bidding format, and said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding includes providing a different bidding format.

50. (new) The method of claim 15 wherein said step of offering the preliminary bidding includes offering the plurality of items for bid simultaneously, and said step of offering the dynamic real-time bidding includes offering the plurality of items for bid individually and consecutively.

51. (new) The method of claim 15 further comprising decreasing an amount of time allotted between dynamic bids as the total number of dynamic bids received increases.

52. (new) The method of claim 15 further comprising providing a matrix of selectable bid amounts for selection by a user.

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53. (new) The method of claim 52 further comprising determining the selectable bid amounts based on the final preliminary bid.

54. (new) An online server system for enabling sales over a computer network to remotely located purchasers who are utilizing computing devices for receiving information regarding a sale and transmitting bid information to the system, comprising:

one or more servers configured to provide 1) a preliminary bidding component conducted over the computer network, the preliminary bidding component offering for sale at least one item, the item being offered for a preestablished duration of time, and the preliminary bidding component resulting in a final preliminary bid, a final successful bid being at least equal to the final preliminary bid; and 2) a dynamic real-time bidding component conducted over the computer network, said dynamic real-time bidding component beginning after closing of the preliminary bidding component upon expiration of the preestablished duration of time and continuing until a higher bid is no longer received, said dynamic real-time bidding component offering for sale the at least one item from the preliminary bidding component, whereby a successful dynamic bid on the item is greater than the final preliminary bid for the item received during the preliminary bidding component.